

Take the “Waste” Out of Yard Waste

Routine lawn and yard maintenance is usually on every homeowner’s to-do list. Keeping the lawn neat and green can become a neighborhood goal, with everyone competing for the title of “best-kept lawn.” Reducing resources and minimizing waste in a landscape should be another worthy goal. Reducing yard “waste” is the route more people are taking, while finding more satisfaction in routine yard care at the same time. Here’s how you can reduce yard “waste” and transform it into yard “wealth.”

Use Organic Mulches—

Recycle leaves, wood chips, grass clippings and other yard trimmings as mulch to retain soil moisture, reduce weed growth, moderate daily and seasonal soil temperatures and reduce soil erosion.

Plant Ground Covers—

Reduce impractical lawn areas (steep slopes, shady areas, low spots) and keep tree roots moist and cool. Less lawn means fewer grass clippings. It also can reduce the amount of pesticide and fertilizer use.

Direct Down Spouts into Planting Beds or Lawns—

Reduce

runoff from down spouts directed onto paved surfaces which can contribute pollutants to lakes and streams. Redirect this precious natural resource to your yard rather than the pavement.

Try Natural Landscaping—

Naturalize at least a portion of your yard to reduce maintenance, grass clippings, pesticide and fertilizer usage. Enjoy the attractive alternatives as your property contributes to a richer ecosystem.

Landscape the Border of Your Yard—Perimeter plantings provide a convenient place to recycle tree trimmings, leaves and garden debris. Decomposition is speeded up by cutting twigs and other materials into smaller pieces.

Select Plants for Proper Size and Vigor—Reduce trimmings by selecting dwarf varieties and always plan for the natural height of trees and shrubs before planting. Pest-resistant varieties reduce both chemical usage and the dead wood from diseased plants. Match plants to proper climate, soil, light conditions and topography.

Manage Lawn Areas

Wisely—Recycle nutrients by leaving clippings on the lawn where they belong. If you must collect them, reuse the grass clippings as mulch or compost. Proper care keeps lawns growing vigorously,

which greatly reduces disease and pesticide use.

Fertilize Conservatively and Carefully—Test the soil and reduce fertilizer use to avoid excessive plant growth which contributes to potential yard waste. Reuse fertilizer spilled on paved surfaces which will otherwise pollute lakes and streams via runoff water.

Use Leaves as a Resource—Small amounts of leaves, when shredded with a lawn mower, can be recycled as an organic nutrient source if left on the lawn. This reduces the frequency of raking. Leaves can be reused to mulch perimeter plantings or as an ingredient in compost.

Leave Space in Flower Beds or Gardens to Trench Compost—Recycle nutrients back into the soil by digging a small pit or trench to bury and compost pulled weeds and garden or kitchen wastes.

Create a Compost Pile or Bin—For yard trimmings with no other use, recycle. Using a recycling bin speeds up the natural process of decomposition.

Plan and Evaluate Your Yard—Reconsidering your routines may require a little time and discipline—as opposed to proceeding as usual. The key is to lessen the waste problem in some way by first rethinking, then reduce, reuse and recycle.

Water Conservation Tips

Indoors

- Fix leaky faucets and plumbing joints.
- Check toilet for leaks.
- Shorten your showers.
- Install water-saving shower heads or flow restrictors.
- Run only full loads in the washing machine and dishwasher.
- Keep a bottle of drinking water in the refrigerator.
- Use the garbage disposal less and the garbage more (even better — compost!).
- Insulate hot water pipes for more immediate hot water at the faucet.
- Consider installing an instant water heater on your kitchen sink.



Outdoors

- Water your lawn only as needed. Stop watering your lawn when runoff occurs.
- Don’t water the lawn on windy days.
- Don’t water the sidewalks, driveway or gutter.
- When washing the car, use soap and water from a bucket. Use a hose with a shut-off nozzle for the final rinse.
- Use a broom instead of a hose to clean driveways and sidewalks.
- Choose drought tolerant or drought resistant shrubs and groundcovers for the landscape.
- Group plants according to their watering needs.
- Use a rain gauge to determine how much irrigation your yard has received.

Transform yard “waste” into yard “wealth”!

Lincoln’s Compost, LinGro, Recycles Grass and Leaves

What is LinGro?

LinGro Compost is produced primarily from grass clippings, leaves and wood chips. These materials are blended by the Public Works and Utilities Department, Solid Waste Operations. Constant monitoring is performed on all materials to ensure a consistent and high-quality product.

LinGro Compost is a humus-like material high in organic matter. It is screened with a 1/2 inch screen to ensure uniform texture. It generally has the following characteristics:

- Total Nitrogen (N): 2.6-3.2 percent
- Phosphorus (P): 0.3 percent
- Potassium (K): 1.2-2.0 percent
- pH: 7.2-8.0

Benefits of Using LinGro as a Soil Amendment

The clay soils that exist in Lincoln and Lancaster County can benefit from incorporating LinGro Compost. The main advantage to LinGro Compost is its ability to improve the soil structure. The clay soils found in Lincoln and Lancaster County are improved in the following ways.

- Increased water holding capacity of the soil.
- Addition of beneficial soil micro organisms.
- Decreased bulk density of the soils.
- Increased soil porosity.

Plants will benefit from the use of LinGro Compost when it is properly incorporated into the soil. Among the benefits are:

- Increased root and leaf development.
- Increased flower, fruit or vegetable production.
- Increased health and vigor enabling the plant to better resist attacks of diseases and insects.

Turf also benefits from the use of LinGro Compost properly incorporated



Lincoln’s 16-acre yard waste compost facility receives about 20,000 tons of grass, leaves and brush each year.

into the soil. In addition to the benefits listed above, turf becomes denser and have a darker green color when compost is used. Homeowners can also benefit through water conservation because less water runs off the yard and instead is absorbed into the root zone of the turf. Building soil health—the structure,

organic content and diverse life of the soil—is the key to growing healthy, vigorous grass that out-competes most weeds, resists disease, stands up to drought and is easy to care for.

How to Obtain LinGro Compost

Each spring the City of Lincoln sets aside a certain quantity of LinGro Compost for distribution to the public at no cost. The material is available at the 48th Street Transfer Station, 5101 North 48th Street. The material is available on a first-come, first-served basis and individuals must self-load the compost.

Individuals and businesses may order a minimum of 10-cubic yards of LinGro Compost directly from the



City of Lincoln’s compost facility. There is a \$6 per cubic yard charge for the compost plus a delivery fee of \$50 per dump truck load. Delivery will be made anywhere in Lancaster County. Individuals may

also arrange their own transportation of the material. Individuals will need to pre-pay for the material and delivery. Persons can place an order by calling any of the following:

- Bluff Road Landfill and Compost Facility: 441-8102
- Compost Operations Supervisor: 441-8336
- Recycling Coordinator: 441-7043

Woodchips Also Available

Woodchips can also be obtained directly through the City of Lincoln’s compost facility. There is a \$5 per cubic yard charge for the woodchips plus delivery. For more information, call 441-8102.

LinGro Compost Recommended Application Rates

LinGro Compost is the natural choice for improving the quality of your soil and turf. LinGro Compost should be incorporated into the root zone of plants and turf to be most effective. For every inch of compost applied, till into six inches of soil. In heavy clay soils, it is recommended the soil be tilled first, then apply compost followed by another rototilling. This ensures the compost is thoroughly dispersed in the root zone.

Established Lawns—Aerate the lawn and broadcast spread LinGro Compost approximately 1/8 to 1/4 inch deep and water thoroughly. Some professionals use a 60/40 mix of compost and sand or topsoil, which is heavier than pure compost and settles into aeration holes or thatch layers more readily. Repeat spring and fall

on cool season lawns. One cubic yard of LinGro Compost will cover 1,296 square foot area.

New Lawns (prior to seeding or sodding)—Apply one-inch of LinGro Compost over the area to be seeded or sodded. Additional compost may be applied. For every inch of compost, till 4 to 6 inches into the soil. One cubic yard of LinGro Compost will cover a 325 square foot area. Many times home builders will dig out a basement for the home and apply the soil on the homeowners lot. For heavy clay soils it is recommended the clay soils be rototilled prior to application of the compost.

Flower and Vegetable Gardens—In spring or fall, apply a one to two inch layer of LinGro Compost over the entire garden area and till into

6 to 12 inches of soil. For established perennial flower beds, apply one inch layer of LinGro Compost and mix lightly with existing soil. When thinning perennials mix compost thoroughly with soil in planting area.

Trees and Shrubs—Apply 1 to 2 inch layer of LinGro Compost on the surface of the ground in a radius not to exceed the drip line of the plant. For best results aerate prior to application.

House Plant Potting Mix—LinGro compost generally has an alkaline pH. It may be necessary to add aluminum sulfate or some other form of water soluble acidifier in potting mixes for pH sensitive plants. Mix thoroughly (amounts listed by volume): two parts LinGro Compost; three parts top soil; two parts peat moss; one part sand or vermiculite.